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COMMITTEE ON CONFERENCES
Organizational session for 1998

ANNOTATED PROVISIONAL AGENDA FOR THE
ORGANIZATIONAL SESSION FOR 1998

1. Adoption of the agenda for the organizational session for 1998.

2. Election of officers.

3. Organization of work for 1998.

4. Programme of work for 1998.

5. Adoption of the agenda for the substantive session of 1998.

6. Other business.

ANNOTATIONS

1. Adoption of the agenda for the organizational session for 1998

2. Election of officers

Rule 103 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly provides that committees other than Main Committees shall elect a Chairman, one or more Vice-Chairmen and a Rapporteur. These officers shall be elected on the basis of equitable geographical distribution, experience and personal competence.

In past years, the Committee on Conferences has elected, in addition to the Chairman, three Vice-Chairmen and a Rapporteur.

At its organizational session for 1989, on 1 March 1989, the Committee agreed in principle that thenceforth the chairmanship would rotate annually among the regional groups.

3. Organization of work for 1998

At its 341st meeting, on 27 August 1992, the Committee on Conferences decided to maintain its biennial programme of work, dealing with items relating

to documentation in even-numbered years and those relating to meetings in odd-numbered years. The Committee also decided that some items would be considered on an annual basis.

At its organizational session for 1997, on 1 April 1997, the Committee adopted its agenda for 1997 and requested the Secretariat to submit a draft agenda for 1998 to the Committee at its organizational session for 1998.

In paragraph 4 of its resolution 46/190 A of 20 December 1991, the General Assembly took note of the guidelines adopted by the Committee on Conferences with regard to inter-sessional departures from the approved calendar of conferences and meetings.[1] At its substantive session of 1994, the Committee decided that requests for inter-sessional departures submitted to the Committee should, in future, be reviewed by the Bureau, in consultation with the Secretariat, for subsequent action. At its substantive session of 1995, the Committee decided that requests for inter-sessional departures submitted to the Committee that involved a change of venue should be referred to the members for approval. Departures that involved other types of changes should, as the Committee had decided at its substantive session of 1994, be reviewed by the Bureau, in consultation with the Secretariat, for subsequent action.

Moreover, meetings of the Committee may be required in compliance with paragraph 6 of General Assembly resolution 35/10 A of 3 November 1980, by which all proposals affecting the schedule of conferences and meetings made at sessions of the Assembly are to be reviewed by the Committee when administrative implications are being considered under the requirements of rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the Assembly.

4. Programme of work for 1998

The terms of reference of the Committee are set forth in paragraph 4 of General Assembly resolution 43/222 B of 21 December 1988. As noted above, the Committee adopted its agenda for 1997 at its organizational session for 1997 and requested the Secretariat to present a draft agenda for 1998 to the Committee at its organizational session for 1998.

Annexed to the present document is the draft agenda for 1998, followed by annotations, which takes into account the earlier decisions of the Committee and subsequent decisions and resolutions of the General Assembly. The Committee may also wish to determine the timing and duration of its substantive session of 1998 and to specify the documentation requirements.

5. Adoption of the agenda for the substantive session of 1998

6. Other business

Notes

[1] Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 32 (A/46/32 and Corr.1 and Add.1), para. 77.

ANNEX

Draft agenda for the substantive session of 1998

1. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.

2. Calendar of conferences and meetings:

   (a) Adoption of the draft revised calendar of conferences and meetings for 1999;

   (b) Improved utilization of conference-servicing resources:

      (i) Meeting statistics of United Nations organs;

      (ii) Consultations with bodies concerning utilization of the conference services available to them;

      (iii) Provision of interpretation services to meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States;

      (iv) Cost accounting;

      (v) Improved utilization of conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi;

      (vi) Improved coordination of conference services;

   (c) Requests for exceptions to section I, paragraph 7, of General Assembly resolution 40/243.

3. Control and limitation of documentation:

   (a) Review of the late issuance of documentation;

   (b) Provision of written meeting records to subsidiary organs of the General Assembly;

   (c) Compliance with the regulations concerning page limits;

   (d) Translation-related matters.

4. Review of the programme performance of the United Nations for the biennium 1996-1997: section 26E, Conference services.

5. Organization of work.

6. Adoption of the report.

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Annotations

1. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

2. Calendar of conferences and meetings:

(a) Adoption of the draft revised calendar of conferences and meetings for 1999

The Committee on Conferences will submit to the General Assembly at its fifty-third session the draft revised calendar of conferences and meetings for 1999.

A draft revised calendar for 1999 will be submitted by the Secretariat to the Committee at its substantive session of 1998.

(b) Improved utilization of conference-servicing resources:

(i) Meeting statistics of United Nations organs

Since 1983, the Committee on Conferences has studied a series of reports showing the meeting statistics of a number of United Nations organs in New York, Geneva and Vienna. In accordance with paragraph 7 of General Assembly resolution 48/222 A of 23 December 1993, the information includes analyses of trends and figures on the utilization of conference-servicing capacity.

In compliance with the foregoing requests, the Secretariat will submit to the Committee at its substantive session of 1998 a report on meeting statistics of United Nations organs. The core sample of organs will be expanded to include the United Nations Office at Nairobi.

(ii) Consultations with bodies concerning utilization of the conference services available to them

At its substantive session of 1997, the Committee requested its Chairman to continue to consult on its behalf with the chairmen of bodies that had consistently utilized less than the applicable benchmark figure (80 per cent) of their allocated resources for the past three sessions, with a view to making appropriate recommendations in order to achieve the optimum utilization of conference-servicing resources.

The Secretariat will provide an oral report on the aforementioned consultations.

(iii) Provision of interpretation services to meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States

In section A, paragraph 9, of its resolution 52/214 of 22 December 1997, the General Assembly decided to include all necessary resources in the budget for the biennium 1998-1999 to provide interpretation services for meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States upon request by those groupings, on an ad hoc basis, in accordance with established practice, and

requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Assembly at its fifty-third session, through the Committee on Conferences, a report on the implementation of that decision.

The Secretariat will present an oral report on the matter.

(iv) Cost accounting

In section D, paragraph 1, of its resolution 52/214, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General, as a matter of priority, to expedite the development of the cost-accounting system for conference services in 1998 and to extend it to other areas of the Secretariat, ensuring that the system reflected the experience of other duty stations. In paragraph 3 of the same section, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to it by 31 July 1998, through the Committee on Conferences and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, on measures taken to develop further the cost-accounting system.

The Secretariat will submit a written report on the cost-accounting system at the substantive session of 1998.

Moreover, at its substantive session of 1997, the Committee on Conferences requested the Secretary-General to report on the notional costs of conference services at the United Nations Office at Geneva, the United Nations Office at Vienna and the United Nations Office at Nairobi.

The Secretariat will submit a conference room paper on the notional costs in question.

(v) Improved utilization of conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi

In section A, paragraphs 12 to 14, of its resolution 52/214 A, the General Assembly noted with concern the underutilization of conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi, called for better utilization of conference facilities at that Office, and encouraged all the subsidiary bodies of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme, the Commission on Human Settlements and other United Nations bodies to hold their meetings at the United Nations Office at Nairobi to the extent possible. In paragraph 15 of the same section, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to assist the aforementioned bodies in improving that situation and to report to it at its fifty-third session, through the Committee on Conferences, on the actions taken to that end.

The Secretariat will present an oral report on improved utilization of conference facilities at the United Nations Office at Nairobi.

(vi) Improved coordination of conference services

At its substantive session of 1995 the Committee decided to consider on a biennial basis the means to ensure the improved coordination of conferences within the United Nations system. Moreover, it requested Conference Services to

maintain an active dialogue with the substantive secretariats of intergovernmental bodies, providing statistics and information on previous performance as well as guidelines on ways and means to enhance utilization of conference-servicing resources. At its substantive session of 1996 the Committee endorsed the idea of the Secretariat to make the active dialogue a permanent coordination feature, and directed that such action should be taken at Headquarters, as well as at the United Nations Office at Geneva and the United Nations Office at Vienna.

In addition, in paragraph 15 of its resolution 51/211 A of 18 December 1996, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to ensure closer cooperation between Headquarters, the United Nations Office at Geneva, the United Nations Office at Vienna and the United Nations Office at Nairobi in order to improve the coordination of conference services. In paragraph 16, the Assembly requested the Secretariat to engage, on a regular basis, in an active dialogue with Member States as a permanent feature at Headquarters, as well as at the United Nations Offices at Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi, in order to improve the coordination of conference services.

Moreover, at its substantive session of 1997, the Committee on Conferences requested the Secretariat to continue to engage on an ongoing basis in an active dialogue with Member States at Headquarters, as well as at the United Nations Offices at Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi, so as to enhance the coordination of conference services.

The Secretariat will present an oral report on the matter.

(c) Requests for exceptions to section I, paragraph 7, of General Assembly resolution 40/243

In paragraph 15 of its resolution 47/202 A of 22 December 1992, the General Assembly demanded that all subsidiary organs of the Assembly comply with the provisions of section I, paragraph 7, of its resolution 40/243 of 18 December 1985, by which it had decided that no subsidiary organ of the Assembly may meet at United Nations Headquarters during a regular session of the Assembly unless explicitly authorized by it.

In accordance with the procedure established by the Committee at its 1986 session and reaffirmed at its 1992 session, chairmen of subsidiary organs of the General Assembly that wish to meet at Headquarters during regular sessions of the Assembly submit their requests to the Chairman of the Committee on Conferences.

A conference room paper will be prepared by the Secretariat so that the Committee may consider requests received in this regard.

3. Control and limitation of documentation:

(a) Review of the late issuance of documentation

In section B, paragraph 23, of its resolution 52/214, the General Assembly requested the Committee on Conferences to review the late issuance of documents

and to suggest remedial action for consideration by the Assembly at its fifty-third session.

The Secretariat will submit a conference room paper on the matter at the substantive session of 1998.

(b) Provision of written meeting records to subsidiary organs of the General Assembly

In paragraph 3 of its resolution 50/206 B of 23 December 1995, the General Assembly noted the intention of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space to replace its verbatim records by unedited transcripts, and requested the Committee to keep the Assembly informed, through the Committee on Conferences, of the experience of that body regarding unedited transcripts. In addition, in paragraph 4, it took note of the decision of the Committee on Conferences contained in paragraph 75 of its report to the Assembly (Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Supplement No. 32 (A/50/32 and Add.1 and 2)), and requested the Committee to report on the implementation of that decision to the Assembly at its fifty-first session.

In paragraph 6 of its resolution 51/211 B, the General Assembly requested the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space to continue to keep it informed, through the Committee on Conferences, of its experience with the use of unedited transcripts. In paragraph 7, the Assembly took note of the recommendation of the Committee on Conferences contained in paragraph 89 of its report to the General Assembly (Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-first Session, Supplement No. 32 (A/51/32 and Corr.1 and Add.1)), and requested the Committee to report to the Assembly on the implementation of that decision at its fifty-second session.

Moreover, at its substantive session of 1997, the Committee on Conferences requested its Chairman to write to the chairmen of those bodies entitled to written meeting records who had yet to respond to the previous letter from the Chairman to remind them of the invitation to consider the possibility of requesting the Secretariat to issue unedited transcripts of one meeting for comparison purposes with a view to the possible substitution of such transcripts for their usual records in the future.

The Secretariat will present an oral report on the matter at the substantive session of 1998.

(c) Compliance with the regulations concerning page limits

In section B, paragraphs 4 to 6, of its resolution 52/214, the General Assembly noted the decision of the Secretary-General that documents originating in the Secretariat should be no longer than 16 pages, emphasized that that reduction should not adversely affect either the quality of presentation or the content of the documents, and stressed once again the need for strict compliance with the existing page limits for reports of subsidiary bodies.

In paragraph 7 of the same section, the Assembly invited all intergovernmental bodies to consider, where appropriate, the possibility of

reducing the length of their reports from the desired limit of 32 pages to 20 pages over a period of time without adversely affecting either the quality of presentation or the content of the reports. In paragraph 8 it decided to keep under review the length and quality of all documents.

The Secretariat will submit a conference room paper on the matter.

(d) Translation-related matters

In section B, paragraphs 10 and 11, of its resolution 52/214, the General Assembly expressed deep concern about difficulties experienced by some Member States owing to the suspension of some publications in all official languages and the delay in the translation of official documents, and decided, in that regard, to request the Secretary-General to provide all necessary resources to reverse that situation.

In paragraph 12 of the same section, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to take steps to improve the quality and accuracy of meeting records in all six official languages through full reliance on sound recordings and written texts of statements as they were delivered in the original languages in the preparation and translation of those records, and to issue those records within a reasonable time-frame. In paragraph 13, it also requested the Secretary-General to ensure that the summary records of the Fifth Committee, given the technical complexity of their subject matter, are prepared by experienced language staff who are thoroughly familiar with current administrative and financial developments in the Organization and are issued within a reasonable time-frame. In paragraph 16 it further requested the Secretary-General to ensure that summary records are translated in all six official languages concomitantly.

Moreover, in paragraph 14 the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to improve and accelerate the accurate translation of documents into the official languages, giving special significance to the quality of translation. In paragraph 15 it stressed the need to strengthen the monitoring of contractual translations to ensure that they meet the quality requirements for United Nations documents.

Furthermore, in paragraph 17 the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue his efforts, where appropriate, to introduce new technologies such as machine-assisted translation and common terminology databases.

In paragraphs 18 and 19, the Assembly expressed deep concern that the limits to self-revision had not been kept at a level that would ensure a high quality of translation, and requested the Secretary-General to reinstate the post of reviser in the six official languages.

In addition, in part III, paragraphs 13 and 14, of its resolution 52/220, the General Assembly noted with concern the abolition of 30 posts of translators and interpreters, and the practices noted with respect to self-revision, which may attain proportions of 80 per cent in peak periods, whereas the specified standard is 45 per cent.

In paragraph 15, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to keep under review the two foregoing issues in the light of its resolution 50/11 of 2 November 1995, and to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-third session through the Committee on Conferences on their impact on the quality of conference services provided.

The Secretariat will submit a written report on the aforementioned translation-related matters at the substantive session of 1998.

4. Review of the programme performance of the United Nations for the biennium 1996-1997: section 26E, Conference services

In its resolution 39/238 of 18 December 1984, the General Assembly approved the recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (see Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 38 (A/39/38)), including the recommendation that relevant intergovernmental bodies should review the programme performance report. In accordance with that resolution, the Committee may wish to consider the programme performance report for the biennium 1996-1997 for Conference Services.

5. Organization of work

6. Adoption of the report